

The cultural shift

The influence of changing cultural preferences on the gap between the lowly and highly educated

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Summary

The academic field and popular media both describe a gap between the lowly and highly educated, concluding that they live in separate worlds. In the past 60 years a shift in cultural consumption has occurred. The elite in the 60's, and thus highly educated, consumed exclusionary high-brow cultures diverting themselves away from the low-brow mass culture. The 90's brought a new pattern of cultural consumption, the general trend being the inclusion of both low- and high-brow cultures. The highly educated became omnivorous in their cultural consumption and the lowly educated became univorous, initiating the omnivore-univore distinction. The overlap in cultural consumption could influence the segregation between the lowly and highly educated. To research this cultural shift interviews in the form of life history research was applied. Discussed with the participant was their cultural consumption and their network in the form of weak and strong ties over the course of the cultural shift. In the life stories of the participant no formation of ties was directly the result of cultural consumption, reducing culture to a building block of ties in existing social spaces such as school, work, neighbourhoods or sport & hobby clubs. This makes the ability of the cultural shift to narrow the gap between the lowly and highly educated depended on the heterogeneity of these social spaces and thus limited.

Keywords: Elite-mass, highly and lowly educated, life history research, omnivore-univore, strong and weak ties

Introduction

“Today we have an average of seventeen managers for one nurse” (Derks, 2017) this is a satirical joke by the comedian Pieter Derks. He makes this joke in an opinion piece about the shortage of skilled workers and the surplus of higher educated. The Netherlands has seen an increase in the higher educated population, in 1969 the ratio of higher and lower educated was 1:10 by 1996 this had increased to 1:3 (CPB, 2003). Many articles with the subject of the lowly and higher educated describe a social gap between the two groups (Couzy, 2016). This social gap is due to the sparse contact between the two groups. In addition, the networks of lowly and highly educated are

homogeneous, the networks of highly educated being the most homogeneous with 87% (SCP, 2014)

The *Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP) performed a comprehensive research on this topic in 2014, carrying the title 'Separated Worlds'. It confirmed that only minimal contact exists between the lowly and highly educated (SCP, 2014). The environments of work, school, family, spare time organisations, friends, and public meeting places are not able to create contact between the two groups, only the neighbourhood gives some possibility of contact (SCP, 2014). The SCP (2014) concludes that the lowly and highly educated live in separate worlds and thus confirming the problematized gap in the media and academic field. These separated worlds can have a multitude of consequences, for example the higher educated are said to be in better health, have higher salaries, and live more spaciously (Huygen, 2016).

One domain in which this division is also visible is that of cultural consumption. Bourdieu (1984), in his seminal work, describes a world where the lowly and highly educated have strongly divided cultural consumption patterns. This work explains how cultural consumption and preferences can contribute to maintaining the separate worlds (Bourdieu, 1984). In Bourdieu's distinction he describes a prosperous elite who is highly educated, being the elite in society their culture is seen as high-status culture. This culture is abstract, complex and an expensive expression of culture, from now on called high-brow culture. Cultural expressions that do not match these criteria are discarded and not seen as a 'correct' culture. In this distinction the elite differentiate themselves from the less prosperous and lower educated group, the mass. Culture is used as an important mechanism to solidify the difference between the elite and mass, maintaining the separate worlds. This difference has as result that both the lowly and highly educated groups have distinctly different patterns of cultural consumption.

From the 60's until now Bourdieu's (1984) view on cultural consumption dominated our thinking of the connection between cultural consumption and social networks. However, in more recent years a competing theory about the division of cultural consumption has been put forward (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). These findings shed a new light on the cultural consumption of the lowly and highly educated. They show a shift in cultural consumption that is not based on exclusion, as in the distinction of Bourdieu (1984), but to a pattern of consumption based on inclusion (Peterson & Kern, 1996). This gives culture a possible new role in the separate worlds of the lowly and highly educated. In this new theory the elite has made place for a cultural consumer who has a broad taste in culture. This new group is called omnivore due to their acceptance of high-brow culture but also popular cultures, from now on called low-brow culture (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). Opposite to the omnivores in this new distinction, are the univores, who have a single preference for low-brow culture. The broad taste in low- and high-brow

cultures by omnivores creates a theoretical overlap in consumed cultures between the lowly and highly educated.

The two seemingly competing theories describe different patterns of cultural consumption resulting in two distinctions, the elite-mass and omnivore-univore (Peterson & Simkus, 1992). Both distinctions are described in different times, the elite-mass in the 70's and 80's and the omnivore-univore theory that started growing in acceptance in the 90's (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). Peterson and Kern (1996) state that they are not competing theories per se but the omnivore-univore followed the elite-mass distinction. This makes it a shift in time when cultural consumption changed from a distinction of exclusion to a distinction of inclusion. This gives culture a new function in the contemporary distinction of omnivore-univore.

The cultural shift could have a positive effect on the segregation of the lowly and highly educated. In the elite-mass distinction the lowly and highly educated lived in culturally separate worlds where culture itself was a dividing tool. In the new distinction of omnivore-univore the highly educated omnivores accepted the low-brow cultures and made it their own. Stepping inside the cultural domain of lower educated univores, relieving themselves from their snobbism (Peterson & kern, 1996). The contemporary overlap in cultural consumption and preferences between the lowly and highly educated can create moments of contact or subjects for conversation. This could reduce the segregation between the lowly and highly educated. Therefore, the following research question is drawn up.

How does the shift in cultural consumption influence the segregation between the lowly and highly educated?

Theoretical framework: The cultural change

In this part the two distinctions will be discussed in more depth, giving more insight into how the lowly and highly educated relate to each other. Following that, the influence of the cultural shift on the segregation of the lower and higher educated is discussed. Here the concepts of strong and weak ties are used to make clear what kind of contact is produced in both distinctions. However, the relation between culture and social network needs to be addressed first.

The relation between culture and social networks

The relation between culture and the forming of social structures is described by the classical sociologists Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim (Lizardo, 2006). The hypothesis constructed by them is that social networks influence the cultural preferences of the ones within that network. The direction of this relation can be summarized as: social networks construct cultural preferences. When related to the segregation of the lowly and highly educated this could result in a split in

cultural preferences as the cultural preferences will follow the social networks that the individual is involved in. Alternatively, Lizardo (2006) found it easier to prove the opposite direction of the relation between social network and cultural preferences. This resulted in the following relation: cultural preferences are responsible for the creation of social networks (Lizardo, 2006). When this direction of the relation is applied the consumption and preferences will result in a network that is constructed around this pattern of cultural consumption. Following this line of thought, societal trends that alter the pattern of cultural consumption can change the formation of social networks. The two distinction, that are described with their distinctly different cultural patterns, could therefore result in different social networks.

Two competing theories

In the discussion surrounding cultural consumption two distinctions can be observed, that of the elite-mass and the omnivore-univore (Atkinson & Deeming 2015; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005, 2007; Peterson & Kern, 1996). Both distinctions describe a cultural consumption pattern. Within both distinctions two groups are compared to each other, where the lowly and highly educated are ascribed to one of the two groups. Both groups have different patterns of cultural consumption (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). The distinctions are divided by time, subsequently having the effect that both cultural consumption patterns can have a different influence on the creation of networks. To set apart the differences in cultural consumption and the possibility of creating intergroup contact both distinctions will be discussed below.

The elite-mass distinction.

The first distinction is that of the elite-mass coined by Bourdieu (1984), his empirical data comes from France in the 60's and 70's (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). The notion that high-status persons retain their cultural preferences to elevated forms of culture is one that is historically accepted (Peterson & Kern, 1996). It is a distinction that very much speaks to the imagination of people, who will, in all probability, know in which group they belong themselves. The cultural consumption in the elite-mass distinction is strictly divided, making it straight forward to categorize someone's cultural consumption (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007). The elite and mass have a strong orientation on their own preferred and accepted cultures therefore the overlap in cultural consumption is very small. The elite prefers the abstract, complicated and exclusionary culture forms that forms high-brow culture (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Appreciation of this kind of culture requires schooling or a mind-set that can set apart culture from function (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). Besides their focus on exclusionary cultures the elite are snobbish towards the mass for the consumption of low-brow cultures (Peterson & Kern, 1996). The elite retain a vision of one 'correct' sort of culture, everything outside this self-proclaimed correctness is seen as vulgar or

too simplistic. Examples of their preferred cultures are theatre, classical music, fine dining, museums and, ballet (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015)

In contrast to the elite, the mass has its own focus on low-brow cultures. They prefer to consume cultures that are fun and entertaining (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). Examples are: rock concerts, pop music, sports events and going to the pub (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). They also have an opinion about the culture of the elite, it being incomprehensible, phony and expensive (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). To put it briefly, the highly educated elite and the lower educated mass have strong feelings of 'us and them' (Peterson & Kern, 1996). In conclusion, the strict divide of cultural consumption and the attitudes towards each other's cultures allow minimal cultural overlap. As a consequence, restricting the possibility that lower and higher educated come in to contact with each other through culture.

The omnivore – univore distinction

The 90's gave light to a competitive theory that questions the accuracy of the elite-mass distinction in contemporary time. Peterson and Simkus (1992) follow up on an observation made by DiMaggio in 1987, this observation concerns the consumption of low-brow cultures by high-status individuals. He did this by taking data in 1982 and 1992, where they looked into growing cultural diversity among high-status individuals (Peterson & Kern, 1996). They came to the conclusion that the snobbism of the earlier distinction has made place for omnivorous consumption patterns.

In this new distinction the higher educated are inclusive towards cultures of a low-brow level but staying true to their own high-brow culture (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). Van Eijck and Knulst (2005) go even further by claiming that young highly educated Dutchman are consuming less high-brow cultures than previous generations. Univores are described as the other group in this distinction, they have a more singular diet of culture and resemble the mass group in the elite-mass distinction. The univores are often lower educated and more restricted in the diversity of their cultural consumption. The growing consumption of the omnivores has the result that an overlap in culture is created, within this overlap both the lowly and highly educated consume culture. This overlap could have the effect that their social networks become more heterogeneous.

The shift in cultural consumption

In both distinctions a different pattern of cultural consumption is visible, the largest difference is the transformation of the elite towards the omnivore. Besides the differences in cultural consumption of the individual groups, an important change is the growing overlap in cultural consumption in the omnivore-univore distinction. The cultural consumption in the elite-mass distinction is strongly divided, restricting possible contact at consumed cultural events. This makes the overlap in the omnivore-univore distinction of importance because it creates a cultural similarity between the lowly and highly educated. Taste and consumption of omnivores run

through different social economics statuses and educational levels, having the result that different people on these scales have common cultural interests.

The two distinctions described here above show a shift in cultural consumption that has taken place between the end of the 60's until the 90's, working through in contemporary society (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015; Peterson & Kern, 1996). The cultural overlap means that the consumption of low-brow culture is consumed by a variety of individuals with different demographic backgrounds, including educational levels. This can result in a social platform of personal involvement that contains a diverse group of individuals. Now that a theoretical overlap in cultural consumption and preferences has been found, the element of contact is still to be discussed. A creative jump needs to be taken to match the growing commonality of cultural taste between lowly and highly educated and how this can result in contact between the two groups.

Contact

To have a better understanding how cultural consumption can result in contact the concepts of strong and weak ties are used (Lizardo, 2006). In comparable research where the relation between culture and contact and vice versa is researched, these concepts are used to explain the sort of ties that can be created. Both weak and strong ties contain their own unique properties and different cultural consumption precedes their creation among individuals (Lizardo, 2006).

Strong ties refer to relations that can be compared with having a good friend. The amount of strong ties a person possesses is limited because of the strong personal bond and time invested in these relations. Strong ties need regular contact and similarity to maintain and reach the level of a strong tie, having the consequence that strong ties do not step outside their own sociodemographic domain (Lizardo, 2006). Due to this strong ties have a limited opportunity to bridge educational levels therefore making it of less importance.

An important property of weak ties is that they have a 'bridging' property, it is a relation that spans over differences more readily than strong ties allow. This stretching of a weak tie has the result that the interconnection between the two actors are more superficial. Weak ties are found in the periphery network of an actor and are in greater numbers compared with strong ties. Lizardo (2006) describes weak ties as follows, "weak connections characterized by relatively infrequent, extra-local interactions (and that are more likely to span a larger distance in sociodemographic space, connecting people to dissimilar others)" (p. 782). The most important part of this quotation is the connection made with dissimilar others, in other words weak ties can bond the lowly and highly educated more easily than that strong ties are able to. Granovetter (1983) states that weak ties are of great importance because they have the capability to connect two homogenous groups, for example lowly and highly educated (Granovetter, 1983).

Having concluded that weak ties will be the tie that is most likely to bridge between the homogeneous groups of the lowly and highly educated (SCP,2014), weak ties will be further explained. Low- and high-brow cultures both strengthen different ties, the creation of strong ties is linked with high-brow cultures, because the exclusive characteristics that high-brow cultures possesses stimulates bonding (Lizardo, 2006). Low-brow culture has the opposite effect and creates weak ties, the recognisability and widely known forms of these cultures strengthen conversation between sociodemographic divided actors, having the effect that both actors can find a commonality between each other, making contact possible.

As mentioned, weak ties are created through low-brow culture. The elite-mass distinction is characterized by a cultural consumption pattern where there is no overlap between the lowly and highly educated in the consumption of low-brow cultures. Among the elite mainly strong ties will be created because of the singular consumption of high-brow culture. Consequently, the lowly educated will not be able to create weak ties with the highly educated because they do not consume high-brow culture. The omnivore-univore distinction does have a cultural overlap, both the lowly and highly educated consume low-brow cultures. Therefore, it can be assumed that both groups share more cultural activities and knowledge than in the previous distinction. The shared consumption of low-brow cultures makes it easier to create weak ties between the lowly and highly educated. Within the omnivore-univore distinction it is expected that there are more weak ties within and crossing social networks, having a positive influence in reducing the segregation between these two groups.

Conceptual model

In figure 1 a visualization of the theoretical framework is presented. On the left the elite-mass distinction with its characteristics is shown based on the works of Bourdieu (1984) and Peterson & Kern (1996). On the right the omnivore-univore distinction is described which shows the differences compared with the previous distinctions. Underneath the distinctions a description of the expectations of the cultural shift on the social networks are presented. Time is visualised between the distinctions.

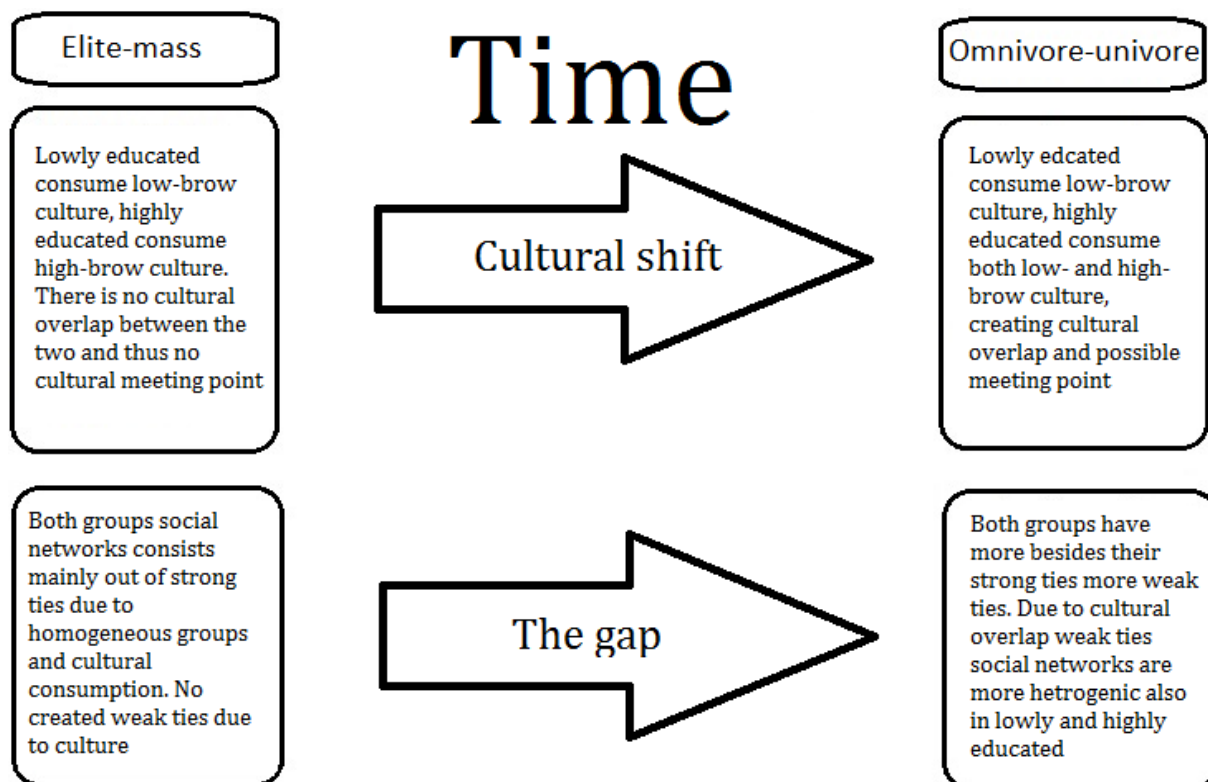


Figure 1: Conceptual model cultural shift

Problem definition

The cultural shift has resulted in an overlap of cultural consumption between the lowly and highly educated. This could have the result that weak ties between lowly and highly educated have increased compared to previous distinctions, due to the omnivorous interest of highly educated in low-brow cultures. To research the theoretical stance the following research question is formulated;

How does the shift in cultural consumption influence the segregation between lowly and highly educated?

The first sub question formulated asks for a description of the possible changed cultural consumption in the 60 year period.

A) How did cultural consumption of lowly and highly educated changed through the cultural shift in time?

The second sub-question focusses on contact and perception between groups in the elite-mass and omnivore-univore distinction.

B) How did the creation of weak ties among the lowly and highly educated changed through the cultural shift in time?

Now that both culture and contact has been described in both distinctions the influence on the segregation between the lowly and highly educated can be answered.

C) What influence does the shift in cultural consumption have on the segregation between lowly and highly educated?

Methodology

This research aims to provide insights in how the shift in cultural consumption has influenced the segregation between the lowly and highly educated. This cultural shift has taken place over a period of 60 years. This creates a time frame of 60 years where this shift has taken place and manifested into a new cultural division. Within this 60-year period the cultural shift has taken place possibly influencing the segregation between lowly and highly educated.

Research strategy

To research the influence of the cultural shift on the segregation input is needed of actors who have personally consumed culture in both distinctions. However this research does not contain a single time frame or experience, the shift has taken place in a period of 60 years. To be able to research the totality of this period the chosen strategy is life history research (Berger, 2008). With this research strategy the life story of an individual stands at the core, societal issues will later be compared to the story told by the participant. In these life stories cultural consumption of the participants and their social networks will be the topic of interest. Berger (2008, p. 309) summarizes life history research as follow *“linking personal stories to collective narratives”*. According to Boeije (2014) in-depth interviews are an appropriate tool to get insights in experiences of participants, thus making this the method of the research. The interviews were chronological structured in the same direction as the cultural shift, the stories of the participants will therefore run parallel to that of the cultural shift. In life history research the end nor beginning is not of interest but the process from the beginning to the end deserves the depth of analyses (Thierney, 2010)

Data collection

Due to the cultural shift of 60 years, the participants needs to be at least 60 years to have consumed culture during this complete period. Eventually 15 life stories were captured with an equal division in gender, age, and lowly and highly educated is achieved. The participant were between 59 and 91 years old. The life stories took between 33 and 105 minutes to complete, averaging around 50 minutes. Besides age, participants were selected on educational level, resulting in eight lower educated and seven higher educated. At the start of the research a

categorization of lowly and highly educated was made as followed: mbo and lower is seen as lowly educated, hbo and higher is seen as highly educated (CBS, 2014). However, when the search for participants and interviews started I noticed that in the decades when the participants were born this classification is not straightforward. Classical education was not available for everybody and thus some of the participants walked other paths to eventually be in positions that highly educated would traditionally hold. Therefore I had to stretch my previously constructed demarcation of highly educated in some cases towards occupational level. The lowly educated often stopped studying after secondary school and started working at 16. The lowly educated therefore were often enjoyed the lowest level of education.

The recruitment started within the personal life of the researcher, asking his social network for an interview about their cultural preferences through the years. After the interviews the participants were asked for contacts who would be interested in an interview, for further selection of interviews a snowball sampling was used (Boeije, 2014). All participants were located in the region of Rijnmond and interviewed in their own personal setting. At the start of the interview they were told that their name and all the named names will be changed. Besides this, the data retrieved from them will be carefully taken into protection.

Conceptualisation

The formulated theoretical framework resulted in the required concepts to research the main question. To come to a workable definition of the concepts literature is used that has previously researched these concepts. The conceptualisation resulted in a typology of three kinds of cultural consumption patterns into which the participants can be categorized. These are: the high-brow univoor, the low-brow univoor and the omnivoor. The univores are described by Bourdieu (1984), these singular consumers can focus on either low- or high-brow cultures. The concept of omnivore is derived from Peterson and Kern (1996) who describes a consumer of both low- and high-brow culture.

The consumed culture of an individual gives information as to which typology of cultural consumption they will fit into. Into this scheme the concepts low- and high-brow are used to define the type of culture that is consumed. The second defining element is a singular or dual focus on low- and high-brow culture. The two types of culture are generally accepted and formulated using Peterson and Kern (1996); Chan and Goldthorpe (2005, 2007); Lizardo (2006) and Atkinson and Deeming (2015).

High-brow univoor	This person consumes purely high-brow cultures. They likes abstract forms of cultural experiences and the transcendence that this kind of culture can deliver. It includes art museums, galleries, opera, theatres, symphony orchestras, ballet and dance companies.
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Low-brow univoor	This person consumes purely low-brow cultures. It enjoys the fun and entertainment that the low-brow cultures cater to. It is easy to grasp and widely available due to its commercially driven companies behind it. It includes pop concerts, blockbuster films and sports events.
Omnivoor	This person consumes both low- and high-brow cultures. The attitude towards culture is inclusive and discovery orientated, they are no experts but generalists of culture. They pick and mix cultures that are interesting to them. The distinction of low- and high-brow is not of importance to them.

Figure 2: conceptualisation cultural patterns

The concept of cultural consumption is now defined in three typologies of cultural consumptions patterns. This enables a linkage between the personal description of cultural preferences of the respondent and the cultural distinctions described in the literature. The next concept that needs conceptualisation is contact, problematized in this research as a lack of contact between lowly and highly educated. Contact is divided into two types, weak and strong ties, with both different characteristics that can have different social outcomes. To formulate the ties the description of Lizardo (2006) is used.

Strong ties	Strong ties are with the ones who are closes to us, interaction is frequent and local. It connects people that are similar to themselves and therefore have a limited reach in sociodemographic space. High-brow taste is found to be helpful in the creation of these dense networks.
Weak ties	Weak ties are connections that are infrequent and take place in a wider geographical space than strong ties but also has a wider reach in sociodemographic space. Popular culture is more widely known under a more diverse public creating contact moments.

Figure 3: conceptualisation weak and strong ties

Results

The results of the interviews will be presented in three phases, each representing a different period in time. The interviews were structured in a similar fashion; The interviewees were asked to tell their story in three periods, representing important periods in their lives. As life phases are not the unit of research, these periods of individual lifetimes are translated to concrete periods in time. Within each period the structure is as followed: first the cultural consumption of the lowly educated are discussed and then that of the highly educated. After this the social networks of again first the lowly educated will be discussed and then that of the highly educated. Due to the clear structure of the presented results of lowly and highly educated no constant references is made to whom has given the quotation.

The first time period of interest is that of the 50's, 60's and the 70's. Within this period Bourdieu (1984) described the elite-mass distinction, making this a relevant time period to start with the first distinction (Atkinson & Deeming, 2015). The cultural consumption has no overlap between the two sociodemographic different group and thus culture should have no bridging qualities. The second period are the 80's and 90's, the change from the elite-mass distinction to the omnivore-univore distinction is progressing, possibly showing signs of change. The last period starts alongside the new millennium, making the time span between 2000 and when the interviews were taken place, 2017. In this period the omnivore-univore distinction should be recognized in the stories of the participants. The expectation is to observe, in this period, that the cultural shift has resulted in a cultural overlap between the lowly and highly educated (Peterson & Kern, 1996). This cultural overlap will create more opportunities to create weak ties, due to the commonality in cultural preference and consumption

The first period

Lowly educated participants indicated that they mainly visited rock or pop concerts and went to the pub in their spare time.

We went to all big names that came to Holland, such as Rod Steward or Neil Young, Pop-Rock things like David Bowie and Elton John, the big pop artist of that time.

An unpredicted result was that a big group within the lowly educated were non-consumers of culture. Half of the participants could not recall consuming culture in this first period, additionally they did not have any cultural preferences.

My cultural experiences were actually none, I started working quite early when I was 15. Before that I went to school and just be together with my friend. Mostly just playing outside in that time.

We did not go out, sometimes to the local disco but that was it.

The lowly educated spoke unpassionately about their consumed culture, most of the time they followed their friends cultural preferences or uses culture as a way to relax. Below a participant explains their motivations to consume their preferred culture, going to the movies.

It was just a bit of entertainment, not a passion or anything like that.

The lowly educated seem to have a singular preference and consumption pattern towards low-brow cultures. They see culture not as an important activity or way to enrich themselves. This brings the described cultural consumption and preference of the lowly educated in line with the theoretical description of the mass in the elite-mass distinction.

The highly educated participants described a different cultural consumption pattern. The preferred cultures among the highly educated were classical music or jazz, the theatre and literature.

Yes the jazz clubs were fun then! They were a bit snobbish, but I also never liked pop music, I have always preferred jazz or classical music.

Besides these cultural preferences the highly educate portrayed a snobbish attitude towards consumers of other cultures. Seeing the people who consumed these kinds of culture as a "lesser" sort who you need to keep away form.

In that time I was not allowed to go to the cinema's, that was not done. This was because of the people who came there, my parent did not want that I came in contact with them.

It should be noted that within the higher educated group of participants, non-consumers were present. However, the general tendency is that the higher educated consumed culture more regularly and more targeted to their own preferences than lowly educated did. The types of culture that are consumed by the highly educated are of a high-brow level, in combination with a snobbish attitude makes that the stories are in line with the described elite in the elite-mass distinction. To conclude the stories regarding cultural consumption of the lowly and highly educated can be compared with the elite-mass distinction

Contact

In the stories of the lowly educated most ties that are described are strong ties, these strong ties are often created at locations that can be categorized in to four groups: school, work, neighbourhood, sport & hobby clubs. These four locations will be called 'social spaces' from now on.

We went clubbing in Hoek van Holland mostly, in that time disco was big, Saturday Night Fever and so forth. I did this with friends from school, two were in my class and one lived in my neighbourhood. We all knew each other from Schiedam.

This participant later explained that their friends have always been from a working class background, other participants stories gave similar impressions of homogenous groups.

The highly educated told similar stories about the way they made new ties, social spaces within this group also had an important role. Beside this similarity, the creation of ties in the social space, the highly educated described their networks as a homogenous group. These groups consisted mainly of strong ties.

My friends were all people from Rotterdam west or Blijdorp. They were, how do I say this, not from a prosperous neighbourhood but they were all like-minded. I created friends there where I am still friends with. Mostly them from the football.

All ties among highly educated are created in one of the social spaces, but in one created tie the influence of culture can be seen.

Frank Hall for example I have met through culture, he was a boy in my class but after I heard that he liked the same music a bond was created.

Cultural preferences are described in this quotation as a building block for contact within a social space. This friend eventually became a strong tie and the described tie in the quotation was between individuals of similar educational level. Summing up, contact among the lowly and highly educated is created in similar ways, this is done in the social spaces. Culturally, lowly and highly educated are distinctly different in the types of culture they consume. Due to the lack in cultural overlap and the dominance of social spaces in creating ties, culture has not resulted in bridging weak ties in the participants stories.

The time in between

The lowly educated begin to explore more culture in this period, both in quantity and in diversity. The group of non-consumers have shrunk in this period but a small group of lowly educated are still non-consumers. The lowly educated begin to experience with different cultural expressions, which for them are new discoveries.

One time I went to Miss Saigon with my colleagues, I found that so profoundly beautiful that I started liking musicals. First I wanted nothing to do with it, I only knew it from TV and always found it boring. But, Miss Saigon blew me away, I think I went three times after that.

The experiments of the lowly educated participants resemble cultures that are of a high-brow level. Nevertheless, many of the experimental cultures by the lowly educated are popular versions of high-brow cultures. Such as the musicals or as in the next quotations, museums. Many of the lower educated state that only museums that are not abstract attracts them, preferably consumed during vacations.

I liked museums especially when I went to England, it has something special there. I really like the natural history museum for example or the world museum with the kinds. [...] art doesn't float my boat, I don't see the point of it.

To summarize, the cultural consumption of the lowly educated have grown slightly, they have become more active but are still in line with consumption pattern of that of the mass in elite-mass distinction.

The highly educated kept consuming the same cultures, but compared to the lowly educated they did this more frequently. Besides the consumption of high-brow culture they began to pass their cultural preferences along to their children, wanting to give them a 'cultural bag' as part of raising them.

For activities with the children we have looked towards the musical sphere, classical music. Of course we did not push this upon them, but not to jump to any conclusions I do not think it has worked. For us it was not pushing cultural taste on them but you try to do what you think is good for them. If that has have effect, yes or no, that doesn't matter that much than. It is just fun to experience things to getter.

Highly educated participants mentioned passing on cultural patterns to their children more often than lowly educated. Besides this, the highly educated do not change their cultural pattern, whereas the lowly educated start to explore more. The middle period is characterized by the manifestation of cultural preferences among the lowly and highly educated. Within the second period the elite-mass distinction still resembles the cultural consumption pattern of the participants the closest.

Contact

The middle period is in many senses in agreement with the previous period. The social networks of the lowly and highly educated mainly consists of strong ties with whom the desired culture is consumed. The most important strong tie in this period is the partner. Common interest within relationships gives the lowly educated confidence and drive to consume and explore culture on a more regular basis.

In that time I had a partner who liked going to rock concerts and doing such things and doing things is always more fun wilt someone else to enjoy it with. In that time we regularly went to concerts, Genesis twice and U2 in the old Kuip. We didn't have that much money, we had four children but Genesis was our music. I consumed more in this time than in the previous time.

The social space of most importance in this period was the neighbourhood, making many friends which quickly grew out to be strong ties. The activities that were undertaken were mostly locally and quite restricted, often not cultural.

When I stopped working I mainly did things with Joke, we went walking together through the park and to the shops in the centre of the village. After that we went home and drank a cup of coffee by that time it was dinner time. That was it actually in that period. Besides that with the parents of the children of the playground here. Sometime later also with Joke and Nanda two other women here in the neighbourhood.

However, the higher educated told stories wherein cultural consumption is shared more easily with both strong ties and weak ties. They seem to combine culture more often with strong and weak ties, forming the kind of contact they have with friends. With the highly educated the neighbourhood was also of importance but this contact resulted more often in the consumption of culture.

Well, you always have other interests with other people. With one you go out to eat and with the other you do something different.

This sharing of culture was also present in the creation and maintenance of weak ties with a business character. Shown here, and in previous quotation, is the ease that higher educated have to share culture with strong ties but also with weaker ties.

There was a phase at my work where we, for client relation management, regularly invited clientele to join us at musical performances. We did this 5 to 6 times a year that led to more cultural interest at my part as well, this was in the time that worked in the banking world.

To conclude, within this period the social spaces are still the source of contact creation. Compared to the previous period there were no stories told that showed the bridging or building block capabilities of culture between lower and higher educated, or other different sociodemographic groups. Both lowly and highly educated still describe their social network as homogenous. Lower educated kept close to their strong ties that they described as homogeneous. The higher educated predominantly consumed culture with strong ties but also began to use culture as building blocks for relation building, although with homogeneous weak ties.

The 21st century

The stories told in this period show that it is a time where the participants consume the most culture, compared with the two previous periods. Both the lowly and highly educated participants told a common story of a growth in total culture consumed and further exploration. The lowly

educated are still more limited in their cultural consumption, this leads to low-brow univores, the non-consumers in the previous periods remained passive in this period. The lowly educated consumed more of their regular culture such as concerts and the cinema, besides this they kept experimenting with popular versions of high-brow culture, as described in the second period. The explanation they give for the consumption of these cultural expressions is the growth in accessibility.

I think the barrier to go to the musicals have become much smaller over time

The cultural consumption of the lowly educated is still strongly focussed on low-brow cultures, furthermore their cultural preference is limited in scope, mostly consuming a small amount of different cultures.

At the moment, really cultural? I don't really come further than the cinemas, I like the theatre but most of the time I fall short in really going.

This makes the cultural preferences of the lowly educated still in line with that of the mass or univores, depending on the cultural consumption pattern of the highly educated.

The highly educated do show a growth in cultural consumption in the third period.

Listening to music, concerts, and theatre are the three main ones, sometimes I go to cinema. Besides this I regularly go to museums, I read a lot about history and lately also about quantum mechanics and alternative universes, 90% what I read is informative.

However some of the stories about cultural consumptions were hard to categorize in either omnivore or univore. Their cultural consumption had a univorous feel but they experimented regularly with cultures that are not at their regular cultural level. These 'experimental univores' are present in the stories of lower and higher educated participants, having its roots in the previous period. They cannot be seen as omnivores because it remain experiments, these experimental cultures are not described as their own. The next quotation of a highly educated participant, who was a strict high-brow univore in the periods before, still has doubts if low-brow culture can be seen as culture.

Nowadays we regularly go to our preferred cultures. But also, well, lately we go to Beyonce kind of things but is that really culture? But we like to do that once in a while, not too much because you

don't do that on a monthly basis. Also abroad, we went to George Michael, we liked to do that, big events, big shows.

The consumption pattern of the highly educated in the third period strongly resembles that of omnivores in the omnivore-univore, making the lowly educated univores instead of the mass. This is due to the development of multiple omnivores, but also due to the strict high-brow univores who have now become experimental univores, in the direction of low-brow cultures. The cultural expansion of mainly the highly educated participants resulted in a cultural overlap between the lowly and highly educated. This overlap is created on the low-brow level, increasing the possibility that one will meet one another and create weak ties among each other.

Contact

The stories of the lowly educated regarding their social network has not changed considerably. They describe their social network as still consisting mostly of strong ties with whom they were friends with in previous periods. An overlap in cultural consumption and cultural knowledge has occurred between lowly and highly educated. Although when listening to the stories in the third period, it became apparent that no ties are made directly through the consumption of culture. The next quotation is of a highly educated participants, who in this period is a omnivore, concludes this.

Personally I have never made a friend or group of friends directly through a cultural activity. The opposite did occur, that I consumed culture with friends.

This reduces culture, again, to the influence it can have within the social spaces, although in this period a cultural overlap has been reached. To research the influence of cultural overlap on the segregation of lowly and highly educated this has to be done within the confines of social spaces. The stories give examples of culture being a bridging mechanism, but not exclusively between higher and lower educated. This bridging mechanism does not bring together two strangers but creates opportunities for conversations between people within a social space.

The first example is given by a lowly educated participant who has come in to contact with a seemingly highly educated omnivore through work. The social space has delivered opportunity for contact but the cultural overlap has resulted in pleasurable contact between lowly and highly educated but also the old and young.

Yes, Kelsey. But that is strange, Kelsey is of course a twenty something and I'm in my sixties but we read a lot of the same books. [...] Kelsey is a young girl who is in university, quit intelligent, a doer

and fun. You don't notice the age difference with here you can talk with her about anything. About theatre, television, books and all sort of things.

This quotation shows that within a social space cultural overlap between lowly and highly educated can result pleasurable contact between weak ties, but not create them.

The highly educated have a more diverse network in the composition of strong and weak ties. Although strong ties are important for the highly educated they enjoy having contact with weak ties on a more regular basis. They are open towards new people and enjoy this contact as this highly educated omnivore below describes.

When Holland was still in the EK and WK we would divided watching the tournament with the neighbourhood. One match we would watch there and the next one at someone's else's house until the team was knocked out. When people move houses it can click with new neighbours, with others it doesn't

In the highly educated group the bridging capabilities of culture was also told. The second example is given by a highly educated omnivore who cannot discuss his broad cultural preferences with his strong tie, Hendrik, who is a high-brow univore. This results in him looking further within his social space and finds cultural overlap with a 30-year younger colleague, of the same educational level, to discuss and consume their cultural interests.

That subject I can discuss with someone else at work, Tom van den Berg, that is a guy in his thirties. He is completely submerged in that genre of music so I use him as a knowledge bank for new bands. Hendrik only likes classical music.

This bridging capability is not as straightforward as it seems, this is shown in the example below, given by a highly educated participant. The participant lives in a subsidised 55+ residential tower, and now living there for 10 years she has given up looking for contact in her flat, she now travels far for contact.

I have a girlfriend in Laren, yes it is easier for me to correspond with that public. Yesterday I went to Scheveningen with a neighbour, she is 55 but I cannot have a conversation with her. [why is that?] Different interests, but that is the problem with this whole building. I have led a very different life.

Unable to talk about her preferred subjects, that are often cultural, she feels alone in her surroundings. Something similar occurs in more of the participants stories, especially with the omnivores. The omnivores not only have a broad cultural pallet but they also prioritise culture

more as a criterion for the selection of friends. They view culture as an important subject for conversation or a filler of free time, contact with people who do not pursue their cultural interests will be harder to maintain.

I find it important that people were interesting or undertake things in their life. People who are prepared to undertake fun activities, people who not only follow, that are people I look for. I preserve my time for those people.

The third period is manifested in the omnivore-univore distinction which is a period where there is a cultural overlap. Bridging due to culture overlap is described in some of the participants stories, in one case this happened in the same fashion as described in the theoretical framework. As described here; A highly educated omnivore adopts low-brow culture into their spectrum making pleasurable conversation about culture possible with a lowly educated univore or low-brow culture. It should be noted that all created ties had a social space at its roots, cultural overlap could only influence contact in these places. The stories of the participants show that culture can only be an additional building block among people in the same social space. Although there is cultural overlap, the lowly and highly educated describe their social network consisting of strong ties. The weak ties that are present in stories are almost exclusively homogeneous at an educational level. This makes the social impact of overlapping cultural preferences questionable because the influence on the segregation of the lowly and highly educated is dependent on the heterogeneity of these social spaces.

Discussion

Within this paragraph the theoretical framework will be discussed in combination with the found results. Reflecting back on how expectation based on the theories and found result, firstly a summary of the results. The stories of the participant told a common story that is similar to the cultural shift described by Peterson and Simkus (1992). In the 60's, 70', and 80's the cultural consumption pattern of the lowly and highly educated matches with what is described by Bourdieu (1984). The mass consumed low-brow culture or were culturally passive, the highly educated consumed high-brow cultures and possessed a snobbish attitude (Peterson & kern, 1996). Over time the cultural consumption pattern changed to the omnivore-univore distinction, becoming the most clear in the third period. The highly educated have expanded their cultural consumption towards the low-brow level, creating a cultural overlap between the lowly and highly educated. With the stories of the participants the change in distinction through time can be confirmed.

The growing overlap in cultural consumption between the lowly and highly educated did not result in the creation of weak ties between both groups. Lizardo (2006) stated that he found

that cultural preferences influence the creation of social networks, despite the more classical opposite direction of this relation. The stories of the participants do not support the theory of Lizardo (2006) due to the dependency of social spaces for the creation of ties. Culture in itself, was according to the stories of the participants, not able to create new weak ties, social places were needed to create first and regular contact. Due to the importance of social space for first contact, the influence of culture is reduced to the people who meet in these social spaces. This nuance in the theory of Lizardo (2006) can have a negative effect on the results of this research. The influence of cultural overlap is not as strong as the overlap between lowly and highly educated in social spaces. A role for culture can be preserved for the creation of weak ties but to a lesser extent than was theorized.

Subsequently some difficulties were found with the omnivore-univore distinction. Although the stories of the participants could be fitted in to these distinctions the further removed from the elite-mass distinction the more difficult it became to do this clearly. In the elite-mass distinction a clear division of the two groups could be recognized, the clarity between the univore and omnivore distinction was harder to differentiate between. The categorization of who belonged to which group was difficult because of the greater diversity in the participants consumption patterns. The diversity and availability of all these cultures in contemporary times makes it difficult to work with a twofold distinction. Peterson and Kern (1996) give some societal and cultural trends that they think are the possible reasons why the omnivore has come into being. However, they did not foresee that this would also complicate their bilateral distinction. Speaking of the reasons for the creation of the univore-omnivore distinction, the stories gave interesting insights to explain the cultural shift, which matched the explanations given by Peterson and Kern (1996).

The participants told that the two separate times are hard to compare, they describe a process of democratization of the cultural world. The snobbism (Peterson & Kern, 1996) in culture has faded, resulting in a larger group feeling at home with high-brow culture. Besides this two other developments have taken place. The first is straightforward, the amount of cultural events has risen greatly throughout the years, notably the examples given are often at a low-brow level. The second development is related to the availability of culture. This is partly due to easy accessibility of knowledge on available cultures. Internet has played a part in this by making information about cultural events publicly available.

Lastly, within this paper, a period of 60 years is researched to see the changes in cultural consumption and the creation of weak ties. Researching a period of 60 years it was inevitable that the participants went through different life phases during this time. Therefore the data that is collected cannot be seen separately from the possible influence that life phases may have had on the cultural consumption. Although there was a range of 30 years between some of the

participants most of them had a similar life course in this 60-year period. Most of them were teenagers or young adults in the elite-mass distinction and pensioners in the omnivore-univore distinction. In the second period most of the participants had children which limited the available time and money to explore their cultural preferences and the creation of ties. Consequently the results need to be interpreted with this intermingling in mind.

Conclusion

The main question in this research is on the problematized gap between the lowly and highly educated: *How does the shift in cultural consumption influence the segregation between the lowly and highly educated?* Firstly the shift in cultural consumption of both the lowly and highly educated needs to be addressed. The lowly educated participants told a common story of growing cultural consumption through time, nevertheless their cultural consumption remained focussed on low-brow cultures. Besides the consumption of low-brow cultures some stories told of consumption of popular version of high-brow cultures consumed by the lowly educated. Within the stories it became apparent that the democratization of culture has created the opportunity for lowly educated to consume these popular version of high-brow culture. The highly educated participants told a different common story, within their stories a greater expansion of cultural consumption was notable. The highly educated started out as high-brow univores or non-consumers but as time progressed they began to experiment more inside and outside their cultural preferences. In the third period the highly educated diversified their cultural consumption so much that they have created an cultural overlap with the lowly educated.

Now that the cultural shift is confirmed the influence it could have on the segregation between the lowly and highly educated can be discussed. The composition of the social networks of the lowly educated has not changed considerably through the three periods. The lowly educated consume culture mainly with the strong ties within their social networks. These strong ties are created in social spaces, the neighbourhood being the most important. The highly educated have seen a small growth in their social network but also constructed mainly out of strong ties created at social spaces. An important difference is that the highly educated do share their culture more easily with people within their social spaces. Due to this, highly educated create more weak ties at their work, neighbourhood, school or sport & hobby clubs.

Finally, the influence of the cultural shift on the segregation between lowly and highly educated will be discussed. The first conclusion is that cultural activities are unable to create weak ties directly at the moment of consumption, as none of the participants told of ties created in this fashion. The second conclusion is in line with the first, the importance of social spaces for enabling contact between people. The influence of the cultural shift can only be seen within the social spaces. Stories are told of the bridging capabilities between sociodemographic groups due to

cultural overlap. Within the social spaces cultural overlap has resulted in weak ties, this was seen primarily between age groups but only once between educational levels. The role of cultural overlap is able to enhance already existing conversations or results in seeing each other outside of the original social space. When asked to describe their social network, and in particular weak ties, the descriptions were often homogeneous in all three periods. In addition to this, the limited influence of cultural overlap in creating or enhancing weak ties is dependent on the heterogeneity of the social spaces. Given these points, the influence of the cultural shift and the created cultural overlap has a limited influence on decreasing the segregation of the lowly and highly educated and is not experienced in the lives of the participants.

Interesting follow-up research would be to investigate how people, that are born during the omnivore-univore distinction, use culture as a social element. This is due to the intermingled life phases what is present in this research. Additionally to this the data did prove that an overlap in cultural consumption between the lowly and highly educated has occurred. This has resulted in a common interest in culture, making the lowly and highly educated more alike. In the elite-mass distinction it was shown that culture was used to hold on to an elite position. Now that in the omnivore-univore distinction the lowly and highly educated have overlapping cultures the function of culture is unclear. Has culture shrunk as a mechanism to distinguish themselves or has a different consumption pattern taken over what represents the elite?

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